

REMARKS

Claims 21-31, 33-38 and 40-42 are pending in this application for consideration. Claims 21, 33, 34 and 40 have been amended and new claims 41 and 42 have been added in accordance with the Examiner's statement of allowable subject matter. Claims 32 and 39 have been cancelled for the reason that the limitations provided therein are included in amended claims 21 and 34.

Claims 21-31 and 33

The Examiner rejected claims 21-31 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being obvious, and thus unpatentable, over U.S. Patent No. 5,593,343 to Bauer in view of European Patent Application No. 865,038. The Examiner also indicated that claims 32 and 33 "are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims."

The Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's rejection of claims 21-31. Nevertheless, in an effort to obtain allowance of the claims, independent claim 21 has been amended to include all of the limitations of dependent claim 32 (and dependent claim 32 has been cancelled accordingly). Dependent claim 33 has also been amended to depend from independent claim 21 (rather than dependent claim 32). Because independent claim 21 now includes all of the limitations of dependent claim 32, claims 21-31 and 33 are allowable in accordance with the Examiner's statement of allowable subject matter.

Claims 34-38 and 40-42

The Examiner also rejected claims 24-36 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being obvious, and thus unpatentable, over U.S. Patent No. 6,322,430 to Kennedy et al. in view of European Patent Application No. 865,038. The Examiner also indicated that claims 37-40 "are

objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.”

The Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner’s rejection of claims 24-36. Nevertheless, in an effort to obtain allowance of the claims, independent claim 34 has been amended to include all of the limitations of dependent claim 39 (and dependent claim 39 has been cancelled accordingly). Dependent claim 40 has also been amended to depend from independent claim 34 (rather than dependent claim 39). Because independent claim 34 now includes all of the limitations of dependent claim 39, claims 34-38 and 40-42 are allowable in accordance with the Examiner’s statement of allowable subject matter.

Furthermore, new claim 41 has been added to include all of the limitations of independent claim 34 and dependent claims 36 and 37. In addition, new claim 42 has been added to include all of the limitations of independent claim 34 and dependent claim 38. Thus, new claims 41 and 42 are also allowable in accordance with the Examiner’s statement of allowable subject matter.

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In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claims 21-31, 33-38 and 40-42 are in condition for allowance and eventual issuance, and such action is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any further questions or comments that need to be addressed in order to obtain allowance, he is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

By: Judith L. Carlson
Judith L. Carlson, Reg. No. 41,904
STINSON MORRISON HECKER LLP
1201 Walnut, Suite 2800
Kansas City, MO 64106-2150
Telephone: (816) 842-8600
Facsimile: (816) 691-3495